

JULY 1950

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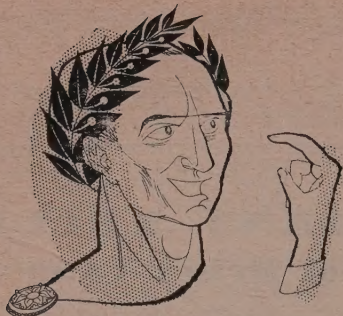
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# THEATRE WORLD

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# Theatre World

(Incorporating PLAY PICTORIAL and THE AMATEUR STAGE)

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Edited by Frances Stephens

## July 1950

THIS month we feature in our picture section the first three plays of the present season at Stratford-upon-Avon. As we write *Much Ado About Nothing* has been added to the repertoire and *King Lear* will have its first performance on 18th July. All these productions will be reviewed fully in our next issue but we cannot let this opportunity go by without adding our special appreciation for all that this season at Stratford has done for the English theatre. We have not been able to include pictures of *Much Ado* (which we featured last year with, of course, a different company). This time John Gielgud himself appears in his own production with Peggy Ashcroft, and the play, a great favourite in 1949, has gained greatly in distinction by the inclusion of these two superb Shakespearean players, who have not acted together for five years. Those who have unforgettable memories of Gielgud's Old Vic *Lear* just before the war will know that his appearance again as the mad king on 18th July will be a great theatrical event.

We write these notes somewhat earlier than usual owing to pending editorial holidays, and at this moment an unexpected heat wave has descended on London which, coupled with the—also unexpected—abolition of petrol rationing, seems to have dealt an unkind blow to the West End theatres. This was a familiar aspect pre-war, when it was customary for a number of theatres to be closed during the summer months, but nowadays we become quite alarmed if several plays fail to make the grade against the weather and other “acts of God.”

During the past week or two, several plays

## Over the Footlights

have run for only a few performances, all the more distressing because in most cases they were new plays from comparatively unknown authors, and it looked as though we might be rejoicing in the advent of some new blood to the ranks of successful playwrights. As it is only *Background* and *His Excellency* have stayed the course among recent new productions. *Madam Tic-Tac*, a strange play about the underworld, notable for some very immature writing and also for a magnificently finished performance by Francoise Rosay as the deaf and blind café proprietress-cum-gangleader, was short-lived at the Winter Garden. It was a great cause for regret that William Templeton's sincere play, *The Ivory Tower*, which was Sir Charles Cochran's 128th production, ran only a few nights at the Vaudeville. The critics, we thought, were unduly hard in accusing the play of lacking flesh and blood, and there was a most moving performance by Francis Lister in the part of Jan Daubek, whose tragic last days were patently based on those of Jan Masaryk.

Another “star” performance graced the ill-fated *The Hat Trick*, by Thomas Browne, at the Duke of York's Theatre. Gladys Cooper, who has not been seen in the West End for two years, gave a scintillating comedy performance as an ex woman cricketer who successfully bowled out three nasty domestic situations with one ball so to speak, all of which were instigated by an incredible young anarchist who descended on her household. The play had its slow touches, but on Miss Cooper's performance alone it might well have run in other conditions, as also might *The Ivory Tower*. F.S.

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# New Shows of the Month

- "Background"—Westminster, 17th May.
- "Touch and Go"—Prince of Wales, 19th May.
- "The First Victoria"—Embassy, 22nd May.
- "His Excellency"—Princes, 23rd May.
- "The Winter's Tale"—Open Air, 25th May.
- "The Bells"—Bedford, 29th May.
- "Stratton"—Mercury, 30th May.
- "The Family Honour"—New Lindsey, 2nd June.
- "The White Eagles"—Embassy, 6th June.
- "Carousel"—Drury Lane, 7th June.

## "Background"

WARREN CHETHAM-STRODE has a workmanlike way of dealing with current social problems and appears to realise that if a playwright sets out to present in an interesting way a topical controversial subject he must not let his characters run away with him; they must be made to fit his theme.

This is what happens in *Background*, a play which is certain to have a very popular appeal because—quite rightly from the author's point of view—it deals with a very profound problem in a very superficial way. The problem in this case is the effect of divorce on the children of the marriage. We are to be persuaded that divorce can only harm them and for this reason Mr. Chetham-Strode gives us a couple who hardly had genuine grounds for divorce at all. We can well imagine that, having patched up their slight differences, these two could rub along reasonably well for the rest of their lives. But supposing the author's couple had been enduring a marriage that was wrong from the beginning and that they had developed that kind of irreconcilability which is far from uncommon, then indeed you would have the real problem. For all know the effect on children of a divided and hate-laden home. If Mr. Chetham-Strode had tried to solve that kind of a marriage we think his characters might have run away with him. No doubt only an Ibsen would have the courage.

John Lomax is a lawyer and is inclined to speak to his wife as though she were a client in court, while Barbara Lomax, obviously a young woman who is none too efficient in home management, is finding light and innocent relief from the growing nerve tension at home with Bill Ogden, who wants her to marry him and go off to a farm in Dorset. The Lomaxes agree to divorce and then—

rather unbelievably we felt—assemble the three children of fifteen years downward and announce their plans. From this moment the whole emphasis is placed on the reaction of the children, the eldest of whom is a little Miss who is quite unmoved by the divorce so long as she can extract sizeable presents from her future step-father. The second girl is deeply distressed, while the boy goes properly off the rails, even to the point of playing truant from his boarding-school and trying to shoot the villain of the piece, who is, to him, of course, the man his mother wants to marry. This last episode is too much for the Lomaxes and the inevitable reconciliation is effected. A granite-like figure hovers over all this in the shape of Nannie Braun, the German housekeeper who, bred of sterner stuff, is horrified at the ease with which her employers prepare to abandon their marriage.

The play is very well acted by Valerie White and André Morel as the parents, and Lilly Kann as Nanny Braun. Colin Douglas is nicely subdued in the thankless part of the would-be co-respondent and full honour go to the young players who appear as the three children, Marian Chapman, Betty Blackler, and particularly John Charlesworth as Adrian, who is called upon to run through a whole gamut of the emotions up to the tense moment of the shooting incident. Norman Marshall has directed the play.

F.S.

## "Touch and Go"

THIS show comes from America but has been so adapted in its topical items to British taste that the country of its origin is scarcely visible; indeed so fresh and sprightly is its humour and so brilliantly new its spectacular scenes that *Touch And Go* might have been written last week.

Helen Gallagher and Kay Ballard are two American members of the cast who give irresistible performances and our own Carol Lynne shows a new versatility, ably supported by Beryl Stevens in a series of characterisations. Bill Fraser is another old friend whose sense of humour is admirably served by this revue, and Jonathan Lucas and David Lober are two other outstanding members of the company.

Some more than amusing sketches and many delightful song and dance numbers are blended to make this one of the brightest shows in town, and Bernard Delfont is certainly to be congratulated on bringing so admirable an entertainment to the West End. All praise is due to Jean and Walter Kerr for the book and lyrics; Jay Gorney for the

Right:

## PEGGY ASHCROFT

who is leading lady with Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies for the 1950 Season at Stratford-upon-Avon. Miss Ashcroft does not appear in the three plays featured elsewhere in this issue, but is to be seen as Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and on 18th July will take the role of Cordelia in *King Lear*.

(Portrait by Angus McBean)

music and to Dick Hurran for his staging of the show which is produced by Robert E. Griffith. F.S.

## "The First Victoria"

IT was not till the closing scene that the appositeness of Mr. Hal D. Stewart's choice of title for his new play at the Embassy Theatre became apparent. Then we learned that Boadicea, Romanised version of the Celtic Boudicca, means, in Latin, Victoria; that is to say Victory. The episode of the rebellion of the Iceni (in what is now Norfolk) against the Roman occupation A.D. 61 was an epic of vengeance and valour, victory and defeat—with a foretaste of final victory.

The historical view of Boadicea, however, suggests the apter title of "The First Elizabeth"; for surely there was more of Raleigh's proud Tudor than of our 19th century paragon of queenly and domestic virtues about this intrepid champion and inspired military leader of her fierce people. And a strong tincture of Saint Joan of Arc—Shaw's, if not the Church's.

Elspeth Marsh's portrayal (following closely the author's presumed conception) is not the fury of our school histories, but a very sedate and dignified lady—indeed a second Victoria—comely and comfortable and eminently reasonable, whose resentment against the Emperor Nero is more a matter of State policy and "democratic ideology" than of a wronged woman's elemental rage and lust to avenge the humiliation of a whipping by his soldiery.

Provided that his interpretation of motive heightens the story's dramatic effect or adds to the depth or significance of his *dramatis personæ*, a playwright is entitled to take such liberties with accepted historical lore as his plot demands. It is a matter of opinion whether Mr. Stewart's version makes better drama than the older one, although it is, of course, very much more in our modern idiom. The writing suggests the latter has been the dominant consideration.

Boadicea's revolt as here presented—involving annexation, breach of faith, extortionate taxation and all the familiar features of "power politics"—is such an issue as



might have kept the Council of U.N.O. busy for many sessions. Such in fact it was: but, minimise the personal issues—the scourging of the Queen and the raping of her daughters—and you blunt the drama's edge.

Nevertheless, thanks to swiftly moving action and many a dramatic situation, the tension is kept up and heightened from act to act till the curtain falls on the dying prophecy of the captive Queen that Britain shall survive and triumph when the glory of Imperial Rome has withered.

This is by no means a sophisticated play, nor does it attain tragedy, but it is honest drama and none the worse in these emasculated times for being patriotic in a full blooded degree.

There are many interesting individual performances besides Miss Marsh's: notably Milton Rosmer's fine rugged British veteran, Lord Lodwyn, Richard Caldicot's engaging and chivalrous Roman Governor, Suetonius Paulius, Oliver Burt's sinister Procurator—and bungler—Catus Decianus, Pamela Alan's attractive Cardua (elder daughter of the Queen), and Richard Johnson's Marius Tertius, whose *affaire* with her belies the historian's cruder version of what happened to Cardua when she stayed out all night. And there is Meadows White's fruity creation of Nobby, who seemed to have strayed into the Colchester of A.D. 61 from the Flanders of 1915.

W.B.C.

## "His Excellency"

**E**RIC PORTMAN returns to London with a brilliant performance in an entertaining new play by Dorothy and Campbell Christie. It may not have been the author's intention that the Portman part should loom so large but the result is wholly desirable and the excellent team work of the rest of the company is not thereby overshadowed completely.

Mr. Portman appears as His Excellency the Governor, just appointed to the ancient British Colony of Salva, and the play opens just before his arrival, when the officials of the island are viewing with trepidation the first Labour successor to a long line of Tory Governors. Furthermore, His Excellency had been a Yorkshire working man, by name Harrison, and a trade union leader, a background which does not seem to them to qualify him for the subtle diplomacies of his new post.

With admirable balance Mr. Portman demonstrates how the new Governor, with a

blend of Yorkshire commonsense and fervent Socialist doctrine, manages by trial and error to justify himself. He has a daughter, Peggy, who, notwithstanding her Yorkshire forthrightness, is willing to learn and has an integrity that overcomes most of the opposition. Annabel Maule plays the part with a nice admixture of gaucherie and charm.

There are other excellent performances from Sebastian Shaw as the Lieutenant Governor of Salva who had hoped for the Governor's post, and by Linda Gray as his wife, both displaying most admirably the dignity and sangfroid of England's traditional ruling classes. Arnold Bell, next to Mr. Portman, gave one of the most outstanding performances of the evening as the most reasonable-minded G.O.C. of the island's troops. Ian Fleming was not quite imposing enough as the Vice-Admiral who stood out against the Governor and was put under arrest for his pains. As the Military Secretary, John Wood gave a pleasing performance, and as various native officials, from Prime Minister downwards, Owen Fellowes, Philip Leaver, Derek Sydney and Joseph Clewes were without exception most convincing and colourful.

The play tells how the Governor in an effort to improve the lot of the native workers in the dockyard, tries to impose income tax on Salva, which naturally arouses the opposition of the island's wealthy classes. A serious strike is fermented which His Excellency tries to quell without calling out the troops. In the end he has to admit defeat over this last point, but manages by the unorthodox means of addressing the strikers himself, aided by an interpreter (a job which was, of course, second nature to him) to turn the tables on his enemies.

The play is excellently written and is notable for its adult ideas and above all for its lesson in how to write of serious political issues without taking sides. Charles Hickman directs with his accustomed skill and the decor by Michael Weight, showing the Herald's Room of the Monesta Palace, Salva is truly colourful, and the glimpse of the sunny blue sky and tiny waving Union Jack in the distance, most realistic.

F.S.

## "The Winter's Tale"

**R**OBERT Atkins' Bankside Players opened their season with *The Winter's Tale* which is, despite its title, as suited to open air presentation in this island as any other play—a serious qualification. Daylight exposes the artificiality of the whole thing and a Charity Fête appearance seems unavoidable. True, the Globe performances were in daylight, but not in "open air" and it is reasonable to think that men of the period wore their clothes to better effect. Implied criticism under this head must except the principals, notably Antony Eustrel, who

## First Time in London



MARTHA GRAHAM

● the celebrated American dancer who will be seen with her company at the Piccadilly Theatre on 17th July for a season of three weeks, following a fortnight's season in Paris. Miss Graham is an exponent of contemporary dancing and has her own school of Contemporary Dance in New York City. She made her debut in dance recitals in 1926 and since has created many brilliant dance compositions.

was well attired as Leontes and wore his clothes as became a prince of story. Mr. Eustrel brought foreboding in his aspect from his entrance. His words came clearly over in all moods and his acting forced us to accept as humanly possible Leontes' jealousy and cruelty. David Powell gave Polixenes the look of a Greek hero and Aubrey Woods spoke in clear tones as Florizel.

Ruth Lodge as Hermione, Vivienne Bennett as Paulina and Judith Stott as Perdita, approximated as near to those three glories of their sex as we ought to expect, but women's voices do not carry so far in a breeze as men's do.

Mr. Atkins himself played Autolycus, Clement Hamelin the Old Shepherd and Toke Townley his son; all very droll.

For the rest, indecision of movement gave the term "strolling players" a new meaning. There was a very promising moment when a bear came out of the bushes, but he only toddled across the sandy waste and, in spite of hope, was never seen again. H.G.M.

### "The Bells"

OF the many plays adapted from the French, few achieve so secure a niche in English theatrical history as *The Bells*, a play occupied with a murderer's last hours. We are shown Mathias, a beloved Burgomaster of a village in Alsace, who laid the foundation of his fortune by felling with an axe a rich Jew who drove to his Inn in a one-horse open sleigh. On the 15th anniversary of the crime, Mathias hears sleigh-bells and suffers hallucinations. In a dream, he is subjected to the trial he has so long evaded in reality. In a dream within the dream, he re-enacts the crime before his judges. In the morning he dies, apparently suffocated, believing he has been hanged.

To act the part of Mathias requires dramatic force of unusual pressure. Irving's performance was widely known and long remembered. Sir John Martin Harvey must have seemed rather frail for so strenuous a crime. Frederick Valk's gifts are what the part needs and a full and thrilling performance he gave.

Ken Tynan's production was direct and skilful.

The drama was preceded by a choice little comedietta with a long title by Henry J. Byron, in which Bill Shine, Gordon Crier, Richard Longman, Shirley Richards and Larry Burns burlesqued very agreeably.

H.G.M.

### "Stratton"

ON 31st May, Ronald Duncan's revised version of his new play was presented. Described as "a play of To-day, in Verse and Prose," the dialogue is distinguished and moving, if occasionally incoherent at a first hearing. The theme would seem to be that,

the heart of man being evil, the vital force in him needs ever-watchful control.

Sir Cory Stratton, K.C., is very highly respected. He is a great man with an accredited biographer in daily attendance. All in his immediate circle at Kirnstone Manor behave with that apparently natural and happy rectitude that the influence of a fine presiding character brings about. The first player to break the rules of polite behaviour in the established game of personal relationship is the Vicar, who steps out of his role of official biographer to tell Sir Cory that he hates him. This indicates a defect in the character of the Vicar rather than in that of his patron but, his self-esteem punctured, all Sir Cory's virtue drains away and, from being a virtuous Jekyll, he becomes a vicious Hyde, making love to his daughter-in-law, shooting his son and strangling his wife.

The action is rather heavy with symbolism but it does not depart far from the hidden truth of passion, although, of course, it cannot express the whole truth. It depicts rather a logical extension of a child's misgivings about life. It can be recommended to those who enjoyed *The Cocktail Party*.

It is very difficult for an actor in a lounge suit to represent a man in contemporary life who could be called great, but William Devlin spoke Sir Cory's lines with variety, skill and quiet power. Cicely Paget-Bowman gave to Lady Stratton the gentle, yet firm, beauty of presence that betokens fineness of spirit. Robert Sansom quietly made the Vicar's lamentable break-away seem almost natural and Barbara Lott completely realised the daughter-in-law with admirable economy. The general direction by Stuart Latham was not very polished. The setting was prosaic and the recorded music, by Benjamin Britten, came through too loudly.

H.G.M.

### "The Family Honour"

THE People's Theatre presented *The Family Honour* by Laurence Housman on 6th June. The play has an Irish setting in 1829 and this seems to be an Irish company.

On the subject of honour inspiring and amusing things can be said. Mr. Housman is very amusing but often catches us by being suddenly serious and noble. Honor is also the name of the chief character, the noble-hearted and beautiful daughter of the wasted house of Burklynch, who is locked up for the night with a passing stranger by her four brothers, from motives mercenary and dishonourable. She and the traveller emerge from the ordeal immaculate but, of course, there can be but one end in store, and so interest rather fails in the third act.

Joan Maude is extraordinarily well suited in the part of Honor, which she plays with a kind of captivating pathos. Patrick MacNee is also very pleasing as the chival-

rous stranger. Among the Burklynch men, Charles Maunsell and Robert Mooney are especially striking.

People who like a sentimental story with a brisk tempo—nearly everybody—should be well pleased with Mr. Housman's latest offering.  
H.G.M.

### "The White Eagles"

THIS play, which Reunion Theatre Guild Limited presented on 6th June by arrangement with Anthony Hawtrej, is interesting chiefly for the number of promising acting parts provided. There are, it seems, too many and consequently no time to develop them. However, the chief character, a prosperous builder of Holiday Camps whose name is a household word, is played laconically by Reginald Tate and is rounded off and understandable. The erection of his new mammoth camp on the holy shore of Snowdonia is dogged by disaster until finally a young fanatic for Welsh Nationalism organises arson and has it burned down on the eve of the official opening. The self-made pioneer of Holiday Camps returns the deeds to Lady Florence Arvon and reaches the arms of her grand-daughter for the final curtain.

The cast of thirteen includes the author, Diana Morgan, and such welcome names as Mary Clare, Reginald Tate and Julian

D'Albie. Each makes a good entrance and raises hope. But the imagination is not caught nor the fancy lifted. Despite the ups and downs of fortune in the story, an impression of flatness persists until we resignedly wait for proceedings to draw to a close.  
H.G.M.

### "Carousel"

THE long-awaited successor to *Oklahoma!* while having all the superb technique and lovely music and costumes one had anticipated, was in some ways a disappointment. Naturally, it was not to be expected that there would be that same exciting impact which came with first sight and sound of *Oklahoma!*, a musical that was so astonishingly different for London eyes and ears.

*Carousel* (the word means roundabout) is based on Molnar's *Liliom* and tells, in a New England setting, how Billy Bigelow, a barker in a fairground, becomes infatuated with a mill-girl, Julie Jordan. Billy is sacked by the jealous owner of the roundabout and soon he is beating his young wife, only coming to his senses when she tells him she is to have a baby. In a desperate effort to get money he allows himself to be influenced by a crook and in an attempt at highway robbery he is caught and stabs himself rather

(Continued on page 35)

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## “Julius Caesar”

(Above): A scene near the opening of the play showing *L. to R.*: Harry Andrews as Brutus, John Gielgud as Cassius, Anthony Quayle as Mark Antony, Andrew Cruickshank as Caesar, Barbara Jefford as Calpurnia and Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies as Portia. On the right the Soothsayer (Timothy Bateson) warns Caesar to beware the Ides of March.



# Stratford Festival 1950 SEASON

THE season at Stratford-upon-Avon has once again reached a very high standard under the directorship of Anthony Quayle, and a distinguished company of actors and actresses have made the Festival a “must” for all lovers of Shakespeare. A full review of this year’s plays, including *King Lear*, to be produced on 18th July, will appear in our next issue. Meantime in this

and the following pages are scenes from the first three productions. *Much Ado About Nothing*, produced last year, was added to the repertoire on 6th June.

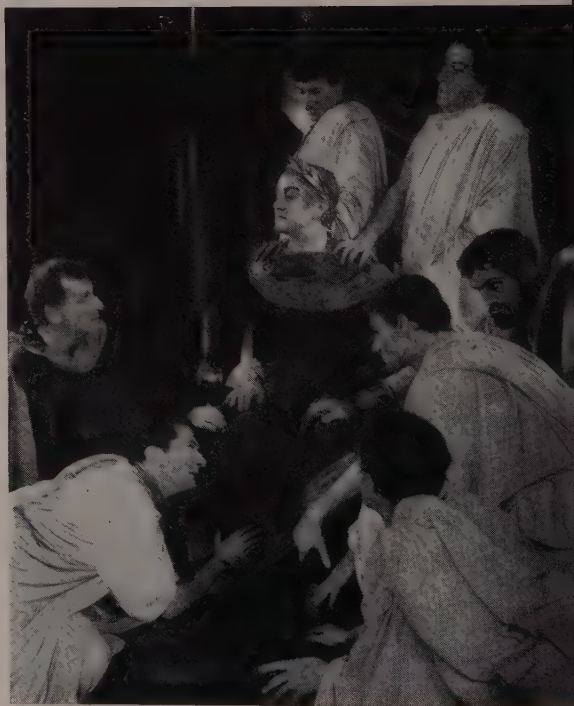
*Julius Caesar*, which had its first performance on 2nd May, is produced by Anthony Quayle and Michael Langham, with scenery and costumes by Warwick Armstrong.

PICTURES BY ANGUS McBEAN



*Brutus:* Give me your hands all over, one by one.

The conspirators persuade Brutus to join them in the murder of Caesar. In the picture with Cassius and Brutus are (L. to R.): Peter Norris as Cimber, Percy Herbert as Cinna, Nigel Green as Decius Brutus and Michael Gwynn as Casca.



*(Right): Casca:* Speak, hands, for me!

The murder of Caesar in the Senate. Casca is the first to strike.



(Above):

The Battle Scene. Brutus and Cassius meet Mark Antony (Anthony Quayle) and Octavius Caesar (Alan Badel) on the plains of Philippi.



(Left):

Brutus: If we do meet again, why, we shall smile; if not, why then, this parting was well made. Brutus and Cassius bid farewell before the final battle with Antony.

(Below):

Antony: This was the noblest Roman of them all. The end of the play. Brutus has died on his own sword.





## “King Henry VIII”

● Scenes from Tyrone Guthrie production of *King Henry VIII*, first produced on 28th March with scenery and costumes by Tanya Moiseiwitsch. This was the first play which their Majesties the King and Queen and Princess Margaret saw on 20th April on the occasion of the first visit of a reigning monarch to the Festival.

(Left):

*King Henry*: The fairest hand I ever touch'd! O beauty. Till now I never knew thee!

Henry's first meeting with Anne Bullen (Barbara Jefford as Anne Bullen) and Anthony Quayle as the King.

(Below):

*Queen Katherine*: Sir, I desire you to do me right and justice.

Katherine pleads with Henry during the divorce proceedings.

(Centre) Andrew Cruickshank as Wolsey and (right) Gwyneth Hffrangcon-Davies as Katherine.





Wolsey: I do profess, that for you highness' good I ever labour'd.

The King turns against Wolsey and the Cardinal tries in vain to defend himself.



The Lord Chamberlain describes the scene in the Abbey during Anne Bullen's coronation.

(L. to R.): George Rose as First Gentleman, Alan Badel as the Lord Chamberlain and Michael Bates as Lord Sands.

(Below):

The baptism of the infant Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Anne Bullen. Henry proudly holds his child, while Cranmer (Geoffrey Bayldon, left) addresses the assembled company during the baptism ceremony. The closing scene of the play.



## "Measure for Measure"

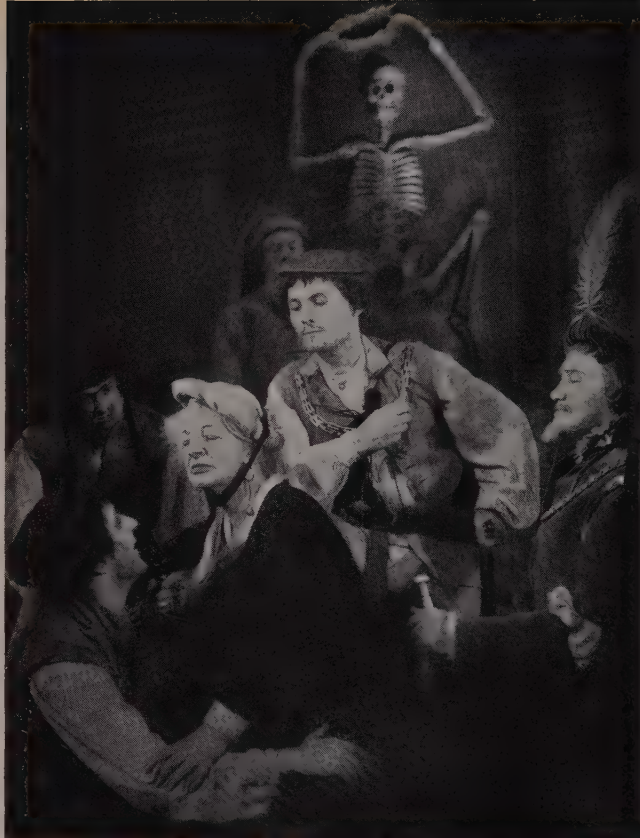
● Peter Brook's exciting production of *Measure For Measure* opened this year's Festival on 9th March. In this case Mr. Brook was also responsible for the scenery and costumes. A fact which greatly added to the sense of authenticity which surrounded the play.

(Right):

Mistress Overdone (Rosalind Atkinson) hears that her livelihood is jeopardised by Angelo, the Deputy during the Duke's absence, who has ordered that all the houses of ill-repute in Vienna are to be closed down. (Right): Robert Hardy as First Gentleman, Robert Shaw as Second Gentleman and Leon Quartermaine as Lucio.

(Below):

The arrest of Juliet and Claudio (Hazel Penwarden and Alan Badel), the unfortunate lovers who are imprisoned under Angelo's edict.



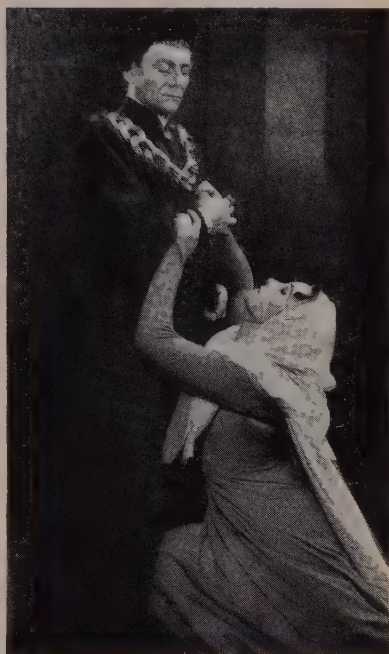


The Duke, disguised as a Friar, visits Claudio in prison. Meantime Lucio has contacted Claudio's sister, Isabella, a novitiate in a nunnery, and begged her to plead with Angelo for her brother's life.

(Right: Harry Andrews as the Duke).

(Below):

Isabella (Barbara Jefford) pleads in vain with Angelo (John Gielgud) for her brother's life. The puritanical Lord Deputy, moved by her beauty, is secretly nursing an illicit passion for her.



(Below):

Elbow, the policeman, brings Pompey, tapster to Mistress Overdone, before Angelo, but the wily Pompey is more than a match for all present.

(L. to R.: Geoffrey Bayldon as Froth, George Rose as Pompey, Michael Bates as Elbow, Harold Kasket at Escalus and Peter Norris as the Clerk to the Court).





(Left):

Angelo has made bargain with Isabella that if she will yield to him, her brother's life shall be spared. At first she refuses to the Duke, still in the guise of a Friar, lay before her a plan whereby both his honour and his brother may be saved. He introduces her Mariana, Angelo's betrothed, whom he has recently set aside. He is arranged that Mariana shall go to Angelo that night to take his place.

(Left: Maxine Audley as Mariana).



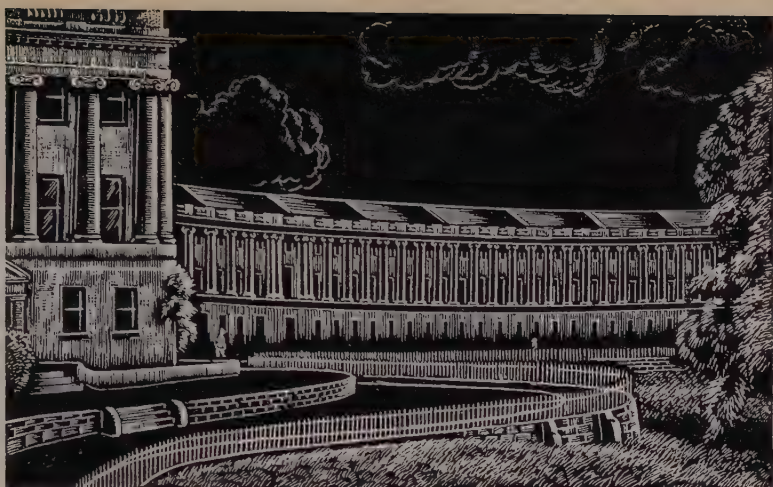
(Above):

Angelo and Escalus welcome the Duke on his return from his travels.

(Right):

A moment towards the end of the play. The Duke, pretending not to know what has happened, condemns Angelo to death when Isabella brings proof of his perfidy. First he orders Angelo to marry Mariana, who then so pleads for her husband, that the Duke's heart is melted, and he is pardoned.





THE ROYAL CRESCENT, BATH

Masterpiece of John Wood the Younger

# Bath Assembly

by HAROLD MATTHEWS

BATH does right by her Assembly to remind us that we have there, as part of England's heritage, one of the wonders of the world. Suppose that, owing to subterranean disturbance, the flow from the spring was increased and the city became aswirl in hot water. Or let us suppose, diverted at a deep level, it appeared at Swindon. We should then recognise the profound mystery and importance of a hot spring. But regularity is the thief of fame. The same regular issue of hot water, at the same temperature, bubbles up constantly at the same place and has been doing so from untraceable antiquity. It is therefore apt to be overlooked.

The Romans, so highly civilised in a practical way, treated the hot spring with great respect and it is claimed that a better idea of a Roman Bath can be obtained here than in Italy, although gold fish spawn in the green water and pigeons foul the sudatoria.

To visit Bath to-day is to pass from the Age of Anxiety to an era of elegance and relax luxuriously in reverie. Pacing the pavements we are reminded with pointed brevity by tablets on the grey stone facades that nearly everybody we ever heard of in our island's story has been there at some time and we reverently salute a distinguished ghost.

Before people gambled by post, the city's prosperity, like that of Monte Carlo, was directly due to high stakes rather than hot springs, but it was not only gambling and folly that went on, even in the 18th century. Did not Sir William Herschel, having directed the Concerts for 15 years, in 1781

extend ancient astronomical bounds by his discovery of the planet Uranus? Town planning, stage coaches and modern male costume can all be traced to a beginning in Bath and the pioneering spirit still pervades. Something in the air, or in the water, impels ardent types to quest, to probe, to penetrate and to invent, sometimes with such regrettable results as stenography, plasticene and kinema. From Bath many a trail takes rise.

It is too late to lament the departure of the Romans, who surrounded the Spring with grandeur, and of Richard Nash, who devoted his life to maintaining an elegant standard of social propriety among the visitors to the Pump Room. For generations, the "Master of the Ceremonies" was what is now called a full-time job. There are few ceremonies nowadays and the Spa Manager takes in his stride the Annual Assembly, which the citizens allow to bubble up and gently subside. A population of under 100,000 finds tradition weighing rather heavily, but it tolerantly adds  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. on the Rates for the Assembly, bringing them up to 20/- in the £1. This indicates a praiseworthy mixture of generosity, sentiment and advertisement, for few of the citizens can afford to attend many performances. Bristol is said to send patrons, but further afield little is known of the festival, and this is its third year. Should Bath again become the Mecca it was before the Industrial Revolution, new accommodation for visitors would have to be found, for the four largest hotels are all out of commission. The Admiralty still have the Empire Hotel and the Pulteney Hotel; the Grand Pump Room Hotel, now the property of British Railways, is closed for

repairs estimated at £250,000; the Spa Hotel has been acquired at the same round figure by the Western Regional Hospital Management for a Nurses' Hostel.

It is doubtful if there survives a sufficient element of modish and affluent aristocracy to bring back a bygone glory, but a test has been made. There has been a Festival Lunch attended by the Earl and Countess of Harewood and a Grand Ball in the Pump Room, attended, it is reported, by Policemen heavily disguised in evening dress in case of incidents. Every morning the Pump Room is open to all, on payment of 6d., and a quiet and mainly elderly gathering results. A trio gently tickles their ears with strains of musical comedy airs of fifty years ago, to which they gently applaud. If one sits there long enough, a cup of coffee is served, which seems, like the water, rather bitter.

Halfway through the festival, at what might therefore be termed its peak, appeared Sir Thomas Beecham to conduct the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. The Forum, diverted from films for the occasion, was filled to the limit of its capacity with ladies and gentlemen tensely expectant. Sir Thomas started with an electrifying performance of "God Save the King" which sent shivers down the spine. He then turned round and sprayed us with wit and satire in a speech which began with an apology for the non-appearance of Lady Beecham, who was to have played a Mozart Piano Concerto but who had been twice forbidden by three doctors to travel to Bath, but who had nevertheless come. Her Steinway piano, however, had not arrived. A substitute had been kindly offered, capable of affording agreeable tintinnabulations but lacking the required sonority and clarity of tone. Lady Beecham had tried to play it, but had strained her arm and would probably be ill for a fortnight.

Sir Thomas said that a Mozart symphony would be played by the orchestra instead of the piano concerto. He then took us wittily through the story of Bath, Nash, Sheridan and Miss Linley, as depicted in his arrangement of a Handel Suite, "The Great Elopement," turning for verification or information to his leader, Mr. David McCallum, once or twice, like a Jove relaxing. Before proceeding to this work, they would play an overture not on the programme. Having played in many countries all over the world, never had Sir Thomas known the programme to be correctly prepared. (Perhaps that is why the Programme Notes are copyright. They are independent works.)

The concert which followed opened with Mendelssohn's overture, "Fingal's Cave," and included the Handel (Beecham) Suite, creating images of sedan-chairs, minuets, wigs and patches; Mozart's Symphony No. 38, the "Prague" Symphony; Haydn's Symphony No. 93; and closed, too soon for the

enraptured audience, with Mozart's March in D, after which the conductor, whose performance had excited admiration for vigour as well as for virtuosity, walked slowly away from sight. Nobody else stirred. Applause was loud and insistent. Sir Thomas was recalled twice and Mozart's March was repeated. Sir Thomas then left and was recalled again. He made a brief and witty speech and wished us a firm and final "Good-night." Bemused with admiration, the audience seeped away.

The Theatre Royal was rebuilt internally after a fire in 1862, but it retains the charm of an earlier period. The comfortable semi-circular auditorium induces a mood of agreeable receptivity. Here the London Opera



MARY ELLIS

as she appears in *If This Be Error*, a first play by Rachel Grieve, which, directed by Joan Swinstead, transferred to the Lyric, Hammersmith, following its season at the Bath Festival.

(Portrait by Angus McBean)

Society, whose good works have been made known at the Fortune Theatre, produced from their repertoire *The Secret Marriage* by Cimarosa and a double bill consisting of two works of recent creation, *Susanna's Secret* by Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari and *Prima Donna* by Arthur Benjamin.

*The Secret Marriage*, first performed in Vienna in 1791, was repeated seventy times in succession in the composer's native city, Naples. It adheres closely to the style of Mozart in every way. The story is humorous, the characters whimsical, there is no chorus, the music is gay and brisk, and the situations are very effective. This is a capital new English version by Dennis

(Continued on page 32)



*Gregory:* D'ye know we found over a thousand old sermons. *Richard:* Good Lord! *Gregory:* That's not such a great number when you come to think of it. Mornin' and evenin' every Sunday; and there's fifty-two Sundays in the year . . .

A scene from Act 2, showing *L. to R.:* Daphne Arthur as Margaret, Herbert Lomas as the Reverend Martin Gregory, Patrick Waddington as Richard Wyndham, Maureen Delany as Aunt Bridget, Jane Baxter as Jenny, Bryan Forbes as Mick and Margaret Halstan as Aunt Lydia.

## “*The Holly and the Ivy*”

AT THE DUCHESS

PICTURES

BY

ANGUS

McBEAN

● THIS new play by Wynyard Browne was highly praised by the critics on its first production a few months ago at the Lyric, Hammersmith, and its transfer to the Duchess Theatre was well deserved. *The Holly and the Ivy* was reviewed in our pages last month and as mentioned then, the author introduces us to a typical English vicarage at Christmastime, where are gathered the three children of the Reverend Martin Gregory, his sister, his sister-in-law and a cousin of his late wife. The younger generation have their problems which they feel their father, the vicar, however kind, cannot understand, and the play tells how circumstances at this particular festive season bring it about that this elderly cleric, immersed as he is in his parish and his books, is brought face to face with some of the difficulties which he of all people should be equipped to understand.



*Jenny:* There's no one else; I must look after him. Can't you understand. *I must.*

The young Scots engineer, David Paterson (Andrew Crawford), who is going abroad for five years, cannot persuade the Vicar's elder daughter to marry him and leave her father.

*Mick:* You probably can't realise what it's like to grow up in the atmosphere of a vicarage.

Mick, Jenny's brother, home on leave from the Army, finds life at home dull and confined.

(Below):

*Gregory:* Where's Margaret. *Jenny:* She's not coming, Daddy.

Richard Wyndham, cousin of the vicar's late wife, arrives to spend Christmas and has brought news that Margaret, Jenny's younger sister, who is a journalist in London, has been unable to come with him owing to threatened 'flu.



*Gregory:* It's the centre of the place, architecturally. It ought to be the centre spiritually, too. And it could be, even today, even now in the 20th century, the church can be the centre of the life of the place, but it's not . . . that little tin shack of a cinema they've gone off to tonight has more influence on the lives of the people here than the church has.

Martin talks to his sister, Bridget, and sister-in-law, Lydia, about some of the disappointments attaching to his work.



*Bridget:* There's no reason why you shouldn't come home, is there?

*Margaret:* No, Aunt Bridget, I'm afraid that's impossible—quite impossible.

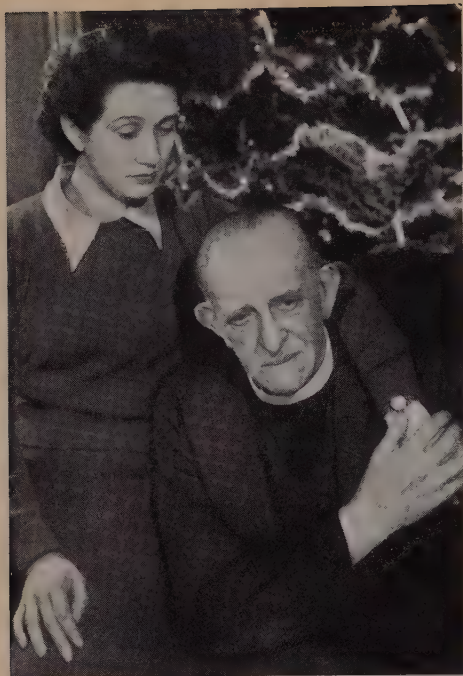
Margaret, who is obviously suffering from nervous strain, arrives unexpectedly. Aunt Bridget and Aunt Lydia, who have discovered that Jenny is in love with David but will not leave her father, tell Margaret that she should come home to take Jenny's place.

*Margaret:* Now you see why I never wanted to stay here very long, when I came. I was always wanting to get back to Simon.

*Jenny:* Of course, of course. Oh, Mag darling, it's wonderful. I'm longing to see him. How old is he now?

Margaret confides in her sister and tells her how her lover was killed in the war, leaving her with a baby. When Jenny enquires about the child she hears that fate had dealt Margaret yet another blow, for Simon had died too.





(Above, Left):

Gregory: Ah, Jenny, what would I do without you  
Jenny: You'll never have to.

Jenny has finally made up her mind that  
she cannot ask Margaret to come home.



(Above):

Mick: How is everything?  
Jenny: What do you expect after last night?  
Bridget's popping and spluttering like boiling fat.  
And Lydia's being "soothing."

For some time Margaret has been seeking  
forgetfulness in alcohol, and on the eve-  
ning of her arrival she had taken her  
young brother ostensibly to the cinema  
but they had returned late very much  
worse for drink.

(Left):

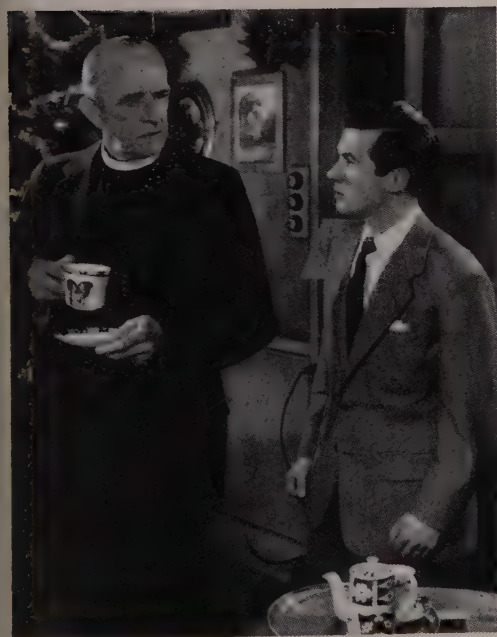
David: What's happened?  
Bridget: Oh dear, there isn't time . . . I'm just  
going to church . . . but it's all disastrous  
absolutely disastrous!

When David comes to wish the family  
happy Christmas, he is met by an air  
of gloom.

*Gregory:* Is she all right?

*Jenny:* Yes, she's all right. Need you let all this worry you so much, Daddy? Need you let it spoil the whole day? After all, it's Christmas.

The Vicar is perplexed and unhappy about Margaret and Mick's behaviour on Christmas Eve. Knowing nothing of Margaret's past he is convinced that Mick led his sister into temptation.



*Gregory:* Aren't you ashamed to stand there and tell me it was your sister who made you drunk?

In an outburst of anger Mick tells his father the truth about Margaret, and how impossible they have all found it to confide in him.



*Gregory:* We're very much alike, you know, Margaret, you and I.

At last Gregory understands everything, and in a deeply moving scene with Margaret he makes her see the way back to a renewed faith in life, and she on her part realises that all she wants is to be at home.



## In the News

Left:

### "His Excellency"

● A scene from Dorothy Campbell Christie's new play presented by the London Theatre organisation at the Prince of Wales Theatre. In this new play H. C. Porter has made a big hit as a member of the Labour Party who made Governor of a British Colony. (L. to R.): Annabel Maule as the Governor's daughter, Eric Porter as the Governor, and Linda Gray as Lady Kirkman.

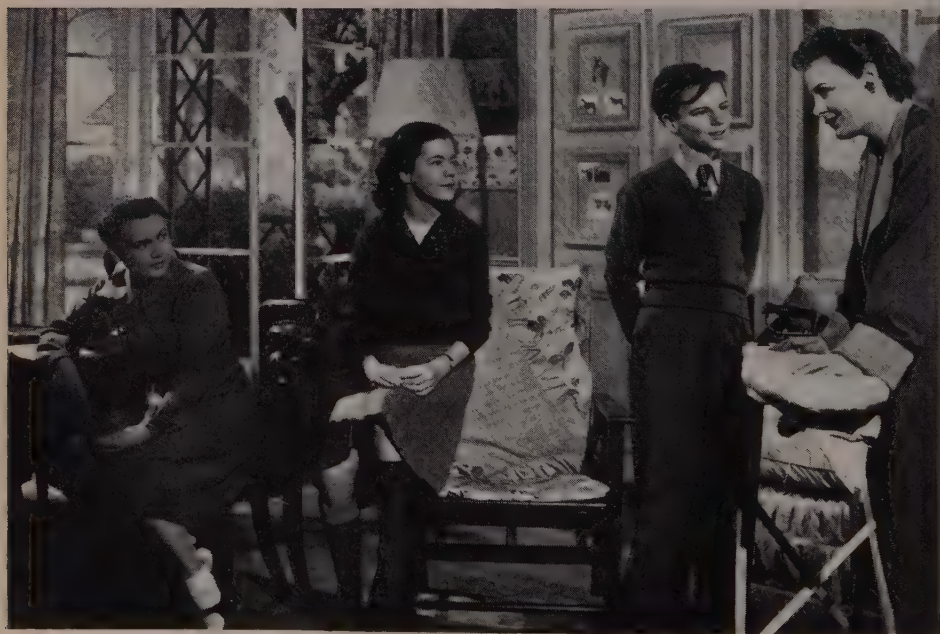
(Picture by Angus McBean)

Below:

### "Background"

● Warren Chetham-Strode's latest play has met with a big success at the Westminister. In the picture are: (L. to R.): Marian Chapman, H. C. Blackler and John Charlesworth as the three children of Barbara Lorrain. (Valerie White, right).

(Picture by Houston-Rogers)



# Creating a T. S. Eliot Role

by ERIC JOHNS

ONE of this year's theatrical experiences must be repeated, as far as I am concerned. I must go again to the New Theatre to see T. S. Eliot's masterly play, *The Cocktail Party*, especially to enjoy Margaret Leighton's moving scene in the psychiatrist's consulting room. As Celia Coplestone, Miss Leighton plays the part of the tragic young society girl whose world seems no more than an illusion. Overwhelmed by the desolation of solitude she seeks comfort, in the hope that someone can convince her that the dreamer is something more than his dreams and that we are not all unloving and unlovable. In her big scene Miss Leighton rose to such great heights that I was held spellbound in my seat, proud to regard myself a servant of the theatre she adorns so magnificently.

The character of Celia, so utterly and completely alone, fascinated me. I wanted to know more about her and lost no time in running Miss Leighton to earth in her elegant Albany sitting-room, where she gave me some indication of how the character appeared to her. "The rôle attracted me," she explained, "because it is such a good part, although occupying so short a time on the stage. A great deal of interest is focused upon Celia and she inspires considerable discussion even after her violent death abroad.

"I liked the part because no definite instructions are given to the actress by the author as to how Celia should look. The stage directions contain no long and involved notes about the dress and appearance of the girl, or how she walks and behaves in the presence of the other characters. A great deal is left to the producer and to the actress, who, as she becomes more and more familiar with the lines, gets closer and closer to the character and is thus able to build up her own highly individual conception of the part. The writing of the big scene with the psychiatrist in the second act is rather more straight forward than the earlier part of the play, where the author offers the actress considerable scope for creation. In the first act he can be said to have left his portrait of Celia unframed and it is up to the actress to embellish it in a suitable manner, according to the evidence she discovers in her lines. The actress is fortunate because the



MARGARET LEIGHTON

(Portrait by Houston-Rogers)

part of Celia contains some of the finest writing in the play.

"Though Celia is not a long part and though I am a quick study, I found it comparatively difficult to learn, as the author uses a fair amount of repetition which makes cues rather difficult. There were times during rehearsal when I was not sure whether a line was my cue or merely one rather like it. The verse form of the play has come in for endless discussion and some playgoers who claim to possess a sensitive ear, confess that they fail to detect the verse. Looking at it from the artiste's point of view, it is quite obvious that there are three major beats to each line, no matter how many words the line contains. Sometimes the line consists of more words than the average, in which case the extra ones are not covered by a beat. There are occasions when a line is broken, a portion being spoken by one character and the remainder by another. In such an instance one player has two beats and the other only one. I recall an instance of a line being split between three different characters, when each takes a beat. These questions have to be worked out at rehearsal, with as much care as a duet in grand opera, because the broken or shared lines all form part of the pattern of the verse and if an artist disregards the beat, the flow of the lines is rudely arrested. The play has been so carefully constructed that even an ordinary piece of stage-business such as the

(Continued on page 34)

# Echoes from Broadway

BY OUR AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT E. MAWBY GREEN



PETER GLENVILLE

the brilliant English director of *The Innocents*, successful new play by William Archibald, based on "The Turn of the Screw" by Henry James, now at the Playhouse, New York.

(Portrait by John Seymour Erwin)

AFTER meeting with considerable success around the country, a new method of play presentation known as "theatre-in-the-round" made its New York debut under the sponsorship of David Heilweil and Derrick Lynn-Thomas. In the centre of a former ballroom in the Hotel Edison (ideally located in the heart of the theatrical district), the producers have built a low platform for the stage and banked it with about three hundred seats on four sides. Eliminating settings, but not props and costumes, and lighting the show from overhead with no footlights, this arena type of theatre creates a fascinating intimacy between audience and performer, besides supplying the extra diversion of being able to analyse three-quarters of the audience's facial reactions—an unadvertised added attraction for whenever the play begins to pall. Under these circumstances, it was therefore not surprising to find during intermission that the untrained "round" playgoers were decidedly more self-conscious than the performing "round" players.

To inaugurate this new venture, an old warhorse, *The Show-off* by George Kelly, was trotted out. First produced in 1924, revived in 1932, and with two motion picture versions that we know of, one starring Spencer Tracy and the other, more recently, Red Skelton, this sturdy comedy, naturally dialogued, provides a steady flow of laughs which build to a delightfully daffy and fast-moving third act, but yet the faint aroma of moth balls clings to the performance suggesting that this is a fine example of the craftsmanship of comedy of the 'Twenties, but still no *Born Yesterday* or *Mister Roberts*—something that will undoubtedly be said of the latter two plays in 1980.

Starring as Aubrey Piper, the big blow and big deal man who is reduced to borrowing from his brother-in-law when it comes to paying his rent, is Lee Tracy, who, when asked how he felt being the first guinea pig for "theatre-in-the-round" in New York, replied: "You feel a little trapped at first. Those critics are awfully close." This statement of Mr. Tracy's may be taken as being strictly tongue-in-cheek for since his return to the stage two seasons ago in *The Traitor* he has re-established himself as a firm favourite, winning warm personal notices in some dreary little plays. Oddly enough, in *The Show-off* he has his best written part but Aubrey Piper is the least effective of his recent portrayals. Aubrey is three dimensional and calls for some sharp character drawing if he is to carry the play and not amount of ingratiating personality, of which Mr. Tracy has a goodly share, will compensate.

Honours therefore went to featured actress, Jane Seymour, as Aubrey's mother-in-law, a common sense woman, who tried to keep her daughter out of the path of the windbag only to discover love thrives in a gale. Miss Seymour's observation on the art of acting in the round consists of: "It just takes more concentration. You have to work a little harder to exclude the audience and pretend they're not there at all."

*The Show-off* is scheduled for a three weeks' run and the first week's receipts hold out promise for success. Capable of grossing \$10,000 weekly, \$8,000 was in the till Saturday night and the venture can operate on about \$6,500. The second bill will be *Julius Caesar* with Basil Rathbone starred as Cassius.

But the Arena is not the only theatre serving up summer stock to New Yorkers this year. Sam Wanamaker and Terry Hayden

have raised \$30,000 for their Festival Theatre. Getting the necessary union concessions to make the venture possible, the producers are planning four plays to run two weeks each, and if any prove successful they will be transferred to another Broadway theatre for a regular engagement. The first of the four "interesting on paper" plays will be *Parisienne*, Ashley Dukes' adaptation from the French by Henri Becque, which back in 1904 was part of the repertory of Mme. Gabrielle Ragan. In the current resurrection, Faye Emerson, Francis Lederer, Romney Brent and Helmut Dantine will appear. The other plays will be Ibsen's *Lady From The Sea* starring Luise Rainer; *Borned in Texas*, a re-write by Lynn Riggs of his 1930 play, *Roadside*, which will have Marsha Hunt and Anthony Quinn in the leads; and *Intoxication*, an adaptation of Strindberg's *Crimes and Crimes*, which has never before been seen over here, with the Swedish actress, Viveca Lindfors making her New York stage debut opposite Sam Wanamaker.

Also designed to catch the curiosity of the languid summer tourists is Michael Todd's incoming revue *Peep Show*, which has been enthusiastically applauded in the Philadelphia tryout. Said to be in the torrid vein of Mr. Todd's previous flash of flesh, *Star and Garter*, everybody is waiting to feast their eyes on the 48 lavishly undressed showgirls and explode at the sketches which are expected to be barely better in behaviour and brilliance than burlesque blackouts.

This production should erase the memory of the last Broadway musical, *The Liar*, based on Carlos Goldoni's 18th century comedy, in which Alfred Drake, the original Curly of *Oklahoma!* and star of *Kiss Me, Kate*, co-authored the book, directed and taught the star, William Eythe, to perform exactly like Drake. For those who braved the barrage of boring rhetoric and came back after intermission, partial atonement was made by the appearance in the last fifteen minutes of a dark and sultry shrew, Barbara Ashley, who more than lived up to all the talk about her that preceded her entrance. With an attractive singing voice and sharp and assured sense of comedy, for a brief while Miss Ashley made *The Liar* look like the work of professionals.

In a recent poll of the New York drama critics, taken by the trade paper, *Variety*, Alec Guinness was voted the best actor of the season for his finely etched portrayal of the mystic-psychiatrist in *The Cocktail Party*; and Shirley Booth was voted best actress for the tender, bewildered sadness she brought to the slatternly wife of a dipsomaniac in *Come Back, Little Sheba*. The best director award went to Peter Glenville for the minor miracle he performed on William Archibald's *The Innocents*, an adaptation of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*. Tried out in summer stock in the very capable hands of director, Herman Shumlin, and starring Leueen MacGrath, *The Innocents* was deemed far from ready for Broadway, so far removed that producer, Richard Aldrich, allowed his option to lapse. It was immediately picked up by Peter Cookson as a vehicle for his wife, Beatrice Straight, and Peter Glenville was called in to go to work. He sat down with William Archibald and got the playwright to completely re-write the script, and in a few months quietly brought in the subtle and effective thriller that the *New York Times* called "a work of art."

Currently in London preparing *The Innocents* for West End presentation, Mr. Glenville, who discovered that life in America had become one script after another with just one Broadway triumph under his wing, will be back in New York this fall to direct Samson Raphaelson's new play, *Hilda Crane* for the Theatre Guild.

His previous trip to the United States he can scarcely remember, having on that occasion been brought over by his celebrated parents, Shaun Glenville and Dorothy Ward, who were appearing in one of those *Belle of New York* musicals of the day.

Having conquered the American stage in one short season, Mr. Glenville is now eager to take strides towards the screen. He was invited to direct the film version of Noel Coward's *The Astonished Heart*, but the British unions upset this, insisting there were too many unemployed movie megaphone men, so it looks like Britain's loss will be Hollywood's gain, for it is pretty certain he will be made welcome out there at the first flicker of encouragement he gives that he is interested.

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# Whispers from the Wings

BY  
LOOKER ON

**F**EW actors write much, apart from plays and memoirs, but in the present-day theatre young Bryan Forbes is an outstanding exception. As an actor in the West End during the past three years he has given vivid performances as the younger brother in *Gathering Storm* with Nancy Price and Emrys Jones, as Gertrude Lawrence's young son in *September Tide*, and now as the mouthpiece of the younger generation in *The Holly and the Ivy* at the Duchess. As a writer he has quite recently published a collection of diverting short stories under the title of "Truth Lies Sleeping." Few young men of 24 have achieved like distinction in two such widely differing spheres.

It was the actor in Mr. Forbes which first fought for recognition. While still at school he made something of a reputation as Question Master in a Junior Brains Trust organised by the B.B.C. He first appeared on the stage at the Intimate Theatre in Palmers Green when only 15½, an event which subsequently led to his going to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art to learn the A.B.C. of the actor's profession. He left before completing his course because he was anxious to tread the boards of a real theatre and face the live playgoing public, even in minor rôles. He preferred to learn his job by working in the theatre instead of sitting in a classroom, so he joined the Rugby Repertory Company and later played similar seasons at Swindon, Manchester and Salisbury. He first won recognition in an Emlyn Williams rôle, playing opposite Joan Greenwood in *The Corn is Green*, when the Connaught Theatre at Worthing was being run by the Rank organisation.

Soon afterwards he was called up for military service and spent some frustrating months in the Army in Germany. As the war was over, he wondered whether his absence from London meant missing golden opportunities to play leading parts in the West End. At this difficult moment in his career, his writing saved him from despair by offering much-needed consolation and encouragement. Some short stories he had written, demonstrating his flair for expressing the personality of characters on paper, were accepted by a leading publisher, who recognised a writer of considerable promise and hoped that the short pieces would be followed by a full-length novel.

Now that Mr. Forbes has put his military service behind him and is back again in the theatre, he is deeply engrossed on this novel, which he hopes to complete by the end of the year. Dialogue fascinates him to such a degree that he finds it easier than any other form of literary expression. Admiring the vitality of American fiction and believing that novels have a lot of dead wood in them,

he will probably stress the conversational side of his characters.

Though his acting bears the hall-mark of sincerity, Mr. Forbes gains more satisfaction from writing, as it is more tangible. The art of the greatest actor is essentially



**BRYAN FORBES**

(Portrait by Robert Krasker)

transient. Edmund Kean, whose blazing triumphs were the talk of early 19th century playgoers, is now no more than a name. We can do no more than form but a faint impression of his dynamic performances from contemporary accounts which happen to have been written by eye-witnesses with a pictorially expressive pen.

Mr. Forbes stands a chance of leaving a doubly distinguished name behind, as an actor whose work will be chronicled by contemporary writers on the theatre, and as an author in his own right. During the run of a play, when he has a considerable period of leisure in the daytime, he writes from mid-day until three o'clock in the afternoon, often turning out a short story in that time, though it is usually based on an idea which he has been carrying round in his head for three or four weeks. His taste and power of expression have attracted so much attention in the literary world that one of the intellectual weeklies has invited this young author-actor to review books in their columns. It is good to hear that the offer has been accepted.

# Americans in Paris

by

PETER CRAIG RAYMOND

Right:

Harry Raymon and Louise Vincent in A.C.T.'s production of Tennessee Williams's one-act tragedy *This Property is Condemned*, with decor by Jose Plaza.

(Picture by Helena Kolda, Paris)



A.C.T. are the apt initials of the American Club Theatre, situated in the Rue Fontaine of Paris. Say the posters: "Ce qu'est L'A.C.T." Replies the *New York Herald Tribune*: "A credit to both Broadway and the Boulevards." Says FRANCE-SOIR of A.C.T.'s programme: "One of the best evenings in Paris." And, sums up the *New York Times*: "The little village called the American Colony of Paris has a theatre at last; a professional repertory company called the American Club Theatre that opened . . . and judging from the applause the American Club Theatre is in Paris to stay."

So, if one takes the Metro to Blanche or Pigalle, walks quickly along to the Theatre de l'Humour at number 42 Rue Fontaine, and sits in a comfortable stall just before 9 o'clock—what is to be expected? Well, for one recent evening, let's see . . . William Saroyan's *Hello Out There*; Irwin Shaw's *The Sky and Lonely*; a French play, *37 Sous*, by Eugene Labiche and, fourth one-acter on the bill, *This Property is Condemned* by Tennessee Williams.

Nine weeks run was attained by that Four-In-One programme. 21st March began the new run: Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit* and Norman Corwin's radio play *My Client Curly*. Thornton Wilder was to follow with his classic *Our Town*.

As to the cast? Louise Vincent is a young and lovely French actress who speaks perfect English with an American accent! State-side schooling could be the cause. Harry

Raymon is a professional actor from the U.S. stage who developed through Army shows and now divides his time between French radio and film work, and A.C.T. The Company is completed by James Barrett, Paul Curtis, Constance Davis, Pat Kennedy, Varvara Pitoff, George Quick, John Robbins, Jane Lawrence, Sarah Heade, Lee Payant, Janet Shaw, Jamie Schmitt and John Lawrence.

Under the direction of Anne Gerlette and George Voskovec, A.C.T. is succeeding in a policy of nothing but good drama. Plays such as *This Property is Condemned*, a duologue between a precocious harlot of fourteen and a schoolboy, do not suit what we love to call the Box Office. Or so we think. Yet, in Paris, it runs for two months! It would seem that the title carries a double meaning.

As to the Sartre: over here it will be yet another addition to that bulging file labelled *Unproduced Sartre*. Now, if he would only write another *Crime Passionel* . . . !

In London we are so used to synchronising the epithets "American" and "Commercial" that we never stop to prove ourselves. When we do stop our judgment is surprised by the mass of non-commercial, even anti-commercial theatre in the U.S.A.

And, nearer home, in the Parisienne Rue Fontaine; evenings at nine; two hundred francs upwards—nearer home there is A.C.T. Americans in Paris. Good theatre proved worth while and successful. "Ce qu'est l'A.C.T."—an example.

## Bath Assembly (Continued)

Arundell, sensible, lucid and singable. The Boyd Neel Orchestra, conducted by Stanford Robinson, accompanied the voices and allowed the words to reach us. Bruce Boyce filled the acting role of Lord Robinson, a fop of fashion, to perfection as well as singing with good voice. The pale blue décor was very pleasing. Transfer of action from room to room was indicated by screen movements, somewhat fidgety and obstructive.

The skittish plot of *Susanna's Secret* is a flimsy foundation for the musical superstructure, the lady's secret being a habit of cigarette smoking unknown to her husband, a non-smoker, who, sensitive to the smell of tobacco, suspected an intrigue. The music has sparkle, but the English libretto is of inflexible banality. Dennis Noble's powerful vocal capacity brought to the husband's role something more than it was worth. Lorely Dyer, at length on cushions with a cigarette, presented a pleasing picture in a past convention, the time being 1911. The familiar credit note "cigarettes by Abdulla" would have been absolutely apt but, perhaps for that reason, it did not appear.

*Prima Donna* cleverly imitates the 18th century style of light opera in setting and story. It is an amusing idea to make an old bon vivant drunk enough to accept a humble member of the chorus as a prima donna and then, when two of these ladies appear instead of only one, to persuade him adroitly that he is "seeing double" and leave him to his bewilderment at hearing double. For neither lady will give way and they sing together, each striving to eclipse the other and each, momentarily, nearly succeeding. The two sopranos, Maria Perilli and Eugenie Castle, sang and acted with spirit, humour and an amusing admixture of burlesque. Arthur Benjamin's music, always agreeable and often brilliant, pleasantly fits the anecdote. The drinking song is particularly fine and here the singing of Douglas Craig, Max Worthley and Martin Lawrence was greatly enjoyed.

One of the neatnesses of construction allows the cast to resolve itself sentimentally at the close into three couples. The young men have their friends from the chorus and the Count is consoled by a sprightly Bellina, with the animation and charm of Bruna Maclean.

The scenery was designed by Joseph Carl and provided a typical Venetian setting, the extensive view of the canal being beautiful without being obtrusive. Production by Douglas Craig was based on that originally made by Dennis Arundell. Mr. Benjamin appeared at the close and paid a generous but deserved tribute to his librettist, Mr. Cedric Cliffe. Mr. Edward Renton conducted the Boyd Neel Orchestra.

In the second week The Bristol Old Vic Company produced at the Theatre Royal

*The Provok'd Wife* by Sir John Vanbrugh. It seemed rowdier and bawdier than the recent Arts Theatre production, but perhaps, seeing the play again so soon made one more conscious of these aspects. Frances Rowe, an altogether charming Lady Brute, won all hearts from the outset by her delightful delivery of the Prologue, specially adapted for the occasion.

At the Palace Theatre, in deference to the dignity of the Assembly, music hall gave place to drama. Here Rachel Grieve's play *If This Be Error*, which was reviewed in the February number of *Theatre World* after its production at the "Q" Theatre, was performed with a star cast. Joan Swinstead again directed. Mary Ellis, as the unhappy second wife, gave us a woman tortured, perplexed in the extreme, but it is still difficult to know what one ought to make of this character. We cannot believe in her past. She fits so nicely into conventional middle-class life. So different from Paula Tanqueray, whose failure to fit into her new and well-ordered life was proof of the character Pinero had given her. Clive Morton gave easy, solid poise to Dr. Moore. Gladys Henson was a crushing realisation of all that "daily women" seem to aspire to be. Mary Morris, the only representative of the original cast, repeated her brilliant demonstration of deep and moody discontent, soaking into a nature vividly creative. Daphne Slater cleverly expressed impulsive charm, half-genuine, half-forced by good nature and a sense of duty and propriety. Her change-over was consistent and full of character. Nicholas Parsons and Clement McCallin completed a seemingly unimprovable team.

At the same theatre in the second week Salisbury Arts Theatre Company presented *Doctor's Joy*, a version of Molière's *Le Malade Imaginaire* by Charles Drew, produced by Peter Potter. The newness consisted in the title; a specially written prologue, spoken by one of Louis XIV's players and a young man of to-day; in renaming the characters with suitably allusive English names; and in the introduction of a lot of farcical business for the central character. The knockabout antics, however low, certainly brought new life to the old play and this is necessary whenever an old play is performed.

There were two interludes, arranged by Betty Meredith-Jones, in the first of which four principal figures from the *Commedia del Arte* mimed the theme of the play in a way that gave immediate pleasure to the eye and satisfied the artistic sense.

Mr. Chronic, perhaps better known as Argan, the hypochondriac, was played with happy exuberance in a small whirlwind of farce by John Phillips, who has marked comedic gifts. The important role of Toinette, who maintains the key, as one may

(Continued on page 35)

# How to be a Playwright

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALAN MELVILLE

by LAURENCE DOPSON



ALAN MELVILLE

(Portrait by Baron)

IF you ask Alan Melville, author of *Castle in the Air*, what makes a playwright, he answers: "80 per cent. gift and 20 per cent. application and commonsense." He adds that a disadvantage is to have been a successful writer of revues. He could also remark that an advantage, from the point of view of publicity for the play, is to offend the pomposity of the National Coal Board.

*Castle in the Air* is not Melville's first play, but it has been more successful than his others.

Alan Melville was educated at Edinburgh Academy, a public school which has produced a number of men who have distinguished themselves in the theatre. Among his contemporaries were Bruce Seaton, the actor, and Stephen Mitchell, who is well-known in production and management. Norman Marshall, the producer, was

a near contemporary. As a scholar Melville was not particularly distinguished, except where it was a matter of writing. His only prizes were gained for essays, and in his bookshelf is a set of works of R. L. Stevenson—his Robert Louis Stevenson Essay Prize.

But each Christmas holidays there was the month in London with an Uncle who prepared an elaborate programme for his nephew. In the mornings there were visits to places of educational interest, such as Westminster Abbey, but the afternoons and evenings were devoted to entertainment—the theatre. The schoolboy from Edinburgh saw all the plays and shows on the London stage. It was perhaps as important a part of his education as that which he received at the Academy.

But Melville did not go straight from school to playwriting. His parents died, and so instead of going to Edinburgh University, he had to leave school and return to his native Berwick to work as an apprentice in the family timber business. He chiselled wood—and his hand, which still bears numerous scars. As the apprenticeship continued, he chiselled his hand less often, but he did not become more enamoured with the timber business. His heart remained in writing.

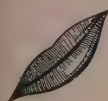
In his spare time he wrote a novel, *Weekend at Thrackley*. It sold well, and it gave Melville confidence. He asked for a rise in pay in the timber business, and when this was refused, he left.

Despite misgiving on the part of members of his family, he decided to make a living as a writer. He did—though only just, at first. He wrote stories and had them published and broadcast, and he maintained his interest in amateur dramatics in Berwick.

After a time he joined the Scottish staff of the B.B.C. He was now succeeding in his ambition to live as a writer, which might have been fulfilled at an earlier age, had it not been for the death of his father and mother.

He joined the B.B.C. as a variety script

(Continued overleaf)

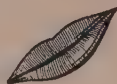


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## How to be a Playwright (Contd.)

writer. It was the one job he did not do, but he did various other things at the B.B.C., first at Aberdeen and then in Glasgow. In both these places he kept his interest in the stage, taking part in amateur dramatics. When war came, Melville was transferred to the B.B.C.'s North American Service, on propaganda work for the United States. He resigned to join the R.A.F.

It was during the war that Melville became associated with the writing of revues for the stage. He wrote much of *Sweet and Low*, eventually all of *Sweeter and Lower*, and all of *Sweetest and Lowest*. These were extremely successful, which naturally pleased Melville at the time. Now he is beginning to wonder, because he is finding them difficult to live down. It is not helpful to be known as the "writer of successful revues" when you want to write plays.

Alan Melville has fixed up a small office in his London flat. He will tell you that he is so lazy that unless he works office hours he would never write anything. But he will add that he sets himself quite nice office hours. He does two broadcasts a week to America, writes topical humorous verse, and has various other things with which to occupy himself, besides writing plays.

As a playwright, you must be able to see being acted the words which you are writing down. Melville paces to and fro, saying and acting his lines before he bangs them out on the typewriter; his audience is his curly-headed dog. At the same time the playwright can learn a lot from the advice of experienced actors. They will suggest small alterations, such as the mere transposition of words in a sentence, which will make all the difference to getting the effect. Jack Buchanan, who plays the lead in *Castle in the Air*, is particularly skilful in his judgment on these matters.

Mr. Melville does not believe those people who say they think of a play and write it in a few days. Even when he has carefully devised a plot, it takes him several weeks to complete the script. The actual mechanics of a stage play are not easy. You have to get the characters on and off the stage, and it must be done so as to appear natural.

It cannot be said that Alan Melville has so far been uniformly successful with his straight plays, and often he has had bad luck. He wrote one play only to find that a similar one was going into production. His biblical play, *Jonathan*, was staged during a heat-wave to which was coupled the further counter attraction of the Olympic Games. But Mr. Melville is early in his career. With *Castle in the Air* he seems to have "arrived" as a playwright, and even before it came to London he was planning another play.

Why the National Coal Board sent two officials along on the first night of *Castle in*

*the Air* to "demand" its alteration is not clear. Scottish village sub-postmistresses could equally have objected to the play, only unlike the Coal Board they behaved in an adult manner. Not that Melville or the cast minded, for publicity is always good—and when it has banner headlines, especially so.

## Creating a T. S. Eliot Role

(Continued)

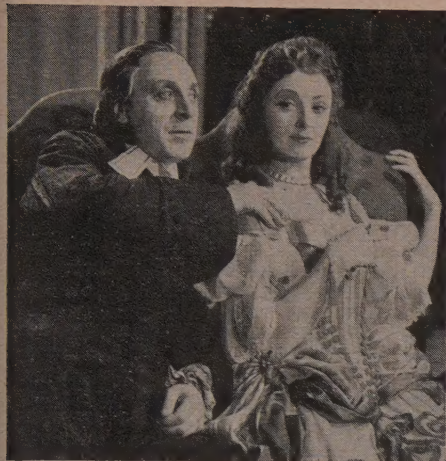
opening of a door is taken into account in the writing and covered by words between beats.

"There is something about Celia Coplestone that reminds me of Ellie Dunn in *Heartbreak House*, a part I played a few years ago. There is a quality of utter finality about both these young women which makes them strangely alike. Celia keeps me on my toes throughout the evening. There is never any question of any of us easing up on the mental concentration demanded by our parts, for once a member of the cast lost a grip on the lines, the result would be chaotic, as improvised words would never fit into the poet's carefully preconceived pattern.

"I am not surprised that *The Cocktail Party* has become a popular success, despite its serious theme and the fact that it is a verse play. T. S. Eliot has translated his profound thoughts into everyday terms and written his play as a high comedy, constructed with such cunning that it holds the attention of the man in the street, as well as the so-called intellectuals. Though we are all in the middle of the tremendous drama of our own lives, we still go to cocktail parties and indulge in a little carefree gaiety now and again. One of the great qualities of the play lies in the fact that we can all read what we like into it. We each see whatever we care to put into it and we are all fascinated by the void, which the author leaves us to fill up for ourselves. One of the vital questions under discussion is that of right and wrong. According to the author there is no absolute right or wrong. What is right for me may not be right for you, but both are necessary, as the psychiatrist impresses upon Celia in his consulting room when she seeks his advice about the course she ought to choose.

"*The Cocktail Party* looks like settling down for a long run, but even if we are called upon to play for a year or more, imagine, in view of T. S. Eliot's character possessing such intellectual depth, it will be a long time before we begin to feel stale. In any case, we will never be faced by the temptation to 'walk through' our parts, as sometimes happens when actors are called upon to play cardboard lovers in those fatuous farces that occasionally last for thousand or more nights."

## Bristol Old Vic in London



George Coulouris and Frances Rowe in The Bristol Old Vic's production of *Tartuffe* or *The Impostor*, Miles Malleson's adaptation of Moliere's comedy which, directed by Allan Davis, is being presented by Tennent Productions Ltd., at the Lyric, Hammersmith, for three weeks from 27th June.

(Picture by Desmond Tripp, Bristol)

## New Shows of the Month

(Continued)

than face prison. Billy, who has been such a bad lad, does not take kindly to the precincts of Heaven, from where he is allowed to return to earth for one day. By now his daughter is fifteen years old, and none too happy because of her dead father's reputation. After some trial and error, however, he is able to set her on the path to happiness and to re-assure Julie, his wife, that he had loved her after all.

The story inclines to impinge too much on the smooth running of the show, particularly in the second act, when the sentiment is also inclined to clog. The chief delight in the end remains with the superb ballets, the magnificent chorus singing, and lovely haunting melodies like "If I Loved You," "You're a Queer One, Julie Jordan," "When I Marry Mr. Snow" and "June is Bustin' Out All Over." If anything there seemed an even greater discipline among the dancers and singers than in *Oklahoma!* (thanks to the combined efforts of Rouben Mamoulian who produced, and Agnes de Mille, choreographer) and the Rodgers' music was once again a superb interpretation of the Hammerstein words.

The company scored heavily and the leads, Stephen Douglass, a good-looking baritone and considerable actor, is ideal as Billy Bigelow and Iva Withers as the innocent

Julie gives a beautifully restrained performance. The second lead, Margot Moser, is also a favourite as Carrie Pipperidge, Julie's vivacious friend from the mill, who afterwards married the sedate Enoch Snow, which part Eric Mattson fills to perfection. Our own Marjorie Mars, who appeared in *Liliom* at the Duke of York's in 1926 in the role of Louise, is now Mrs. Mullin, the loud-mouthed carousel owner, and Morgan Davies is a fruity villain as Jigger Craigin. Marion Ross also is outstanding for her songs as Nettie Fowler.

Above all, the audience liked Bambi Linn, who appears as Billy's daughter, Louise, and though now twenty-four, Miss Linn gave an astonishingly clever interpretation of the fifteen-year-old, both in her looks and in the tremendous verve of her dancing.

F.S.

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## The Bath Assembly (Continued)

say, of the comedy and links the action, was cleverly sustained by Joan White. Kathleen Helme's work was outstanding both as the child Susan and as Columbine in the harlequinade. Haydn Jones also doubled most efficiently. Very enjoyable was the period music played on a spinet by Marie Phillips. Décor by Henry Graveney was pictorially agreeable and functioned excellently. Indeed, some of the humour was directly attributable to the layout of the scene, but, no doubt, Mr. Potter ordered this. Though exceedingly lively and fresh, this production did not quite clear the last ditch. After all the frolic throughout, Argan's ceremony of initiation as a doctor was rather tamely ordered and without invention.

It would not be seemly for Antiquity to "go Gay" but, without fear of this, Bath could take more of the stimulating wine of Art to galvanise it into showing that it still is essentially what in its great days it was. As a city, it is as unique for loveliness as for the possession of hot springs. But it is necessary to do something to remind the world of its existence. Hence, presumably, the Assembly. The paradox is that, having been attracted to the Assembly, we are apt to feel that Bath alone is enough. This "City lulled asleep by the chime of passing years" puts its spell upon us and binds us in the chains of our own reveries.

As for the present festival, one must confess one would be sorry to journey to Wolverhampton, for instance, for similar entertainment. On the dramatic side, it can be said that *If This Be Error*, in point of acting and production, was undoubtedly the best show. The rest was creditable repertory work.

By reason of its early date, Bath Assembly will probably be the opening event in the Festival of Britain next year.

# Amateur Stage

WHAT section of the public, more than the vast army of amateur musical societies, has a warmer regard for the Gilbert and Sullivan operas? Where is the tradition of their production more observed and valued than in the hundreds of provincial operatic societies? Inquiries to this journal indicate that some amateurs are a little uncertain about the position next season with "G. & S.," following upon the publicity given to the expiration of the copyright in Sullivan's music next November, fifty years after his death.

As the copyright in the libretti, Gilbert's work, survives until 1961, no stage performance of the operas, or a colourable imitation of them, can be given without the consent and authority of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, who hold the rights in the libretti. It is true that the lapse in the copyright of the music opens the door for the swing merchants to take liberties with Sullivan's work, but there can be no question of indiscriminate production of the operas as a whole.

Inquiries of the D'Oyly Carte Company in June elicited the response that they were fully aware of the implications of the position, and were determined to protect their

interests to the utmost. But the spokesman for the company acknowledged with warmth the long and happy association they had always enjoyed with the British amateur stage, and its continuance to 1961 was anticipated. And Mr. Arthur Sexton, director of the National Operatic and Dramatic Association, confirmed that amateur operatic societies can face the coming season with the clear knowledge that the stage production position with "G. & S." remains as it was, under the control of the D'Oyly Carte Company.

Two points remain. The phrase "colourable imitation" has been used. This is taken from the copyright law, and it means what it says, that no "colourable imitation" of Gilbert's work can be used to make up a show with Sullivan's music. What is or is not a colourable imitation might be a most expensive question to answer in the courts.

The other point is the happier suggestion that possibly a special Act of Parliament might secure a perpetual copyright in the national interest in "G. & S." A nice idea but followed to its logical conclusion one must ask—if "G. & S.," why not Shakespeare or Purcell or Elgar? What is the answer?

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What persuaded Y.W.C.A. Central Club to choose Planquette's old musical *Rip Van Winkle* for staging at the Queen Mary Hall in June? It has its points, with some good melodies first, but the Club put some honest effort into it and the result, in their own theatre, was amateur work of an integrity not always found in the hired commercial atmosphere. Full marks to the spirited chorus singing, not large in numbers, but whole hearted in volume, and pleasant to hear and see. The principals were average with Winifred Darman somewhat above the level. The producer, Pauline Stuart, stuck to the old-fashioned and naïve book, yet, curiously enough, a strong impression from seeing this *Rip Van Winkle* was how eminently suitable this story and theme could be for modern treatment. A good chance for a new professional approach, with or without Planquette's music. Another point from this Y.W.C.A. production—the orchestra under Joan Kemp Potter's direction. Placed cornerwise in the stalls, good position, it was made up of piano, five violins, cello, bass, flute, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, and tympani. At times a little uncertain and ragged, yet the musical accompaniment was an integral part of the production, and the solos and choruses came over with zest. Scenery and other accessories were the work of club members, and the result was an evening with amateur refreshingly "different."

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